



# **DORSET**

Local Enterprise Partnership

**Dorset Rural Enterprise  
Group**

**Terms of Reference**

**January 2019**

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Dorset Rural Enterprise Group ('Dorset REG' or 'Group') is a voluntary partnership established at the invitation of the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (Dorset LEP). The Dorset REG fully supports the Dorset LEP's overarching aim to create more jobs and drive economic growth in Dorset through public, private and cross sector partnership and investment, with a particular focus on its rural economy. The Dorset REG works to Defra's definition of 'rural' Dorset, although it appreciates the close interrelationships with Dorset's 'urban' areas and its neighbouring local enterprise partnerships.

Reviewed and re-approved January 2019.

## 2. Objectives

- 2.1 The overriding objective for the Dorset REG is to ensure:
- "All of Dorset's residents and businesses are able to fully contribute to and benefit from its rural economy."

## 3. Status

- 3.1 The Dorset REG is established as an independent voluntary partnership, without formal legal status. It conducts its activities in the interests of the area it serves and secures its long-term objectives without giving undue favour to any organisation or Group member.

## 4. Role

- 4.1 The Dorset REG shall be responsible for:
- Maintaining and actioning the Dorset Rural Enterprise Priorities Paper;
  - Aspiring to increase the economic productivity and wage levels in rural Dorset, closing the gap on Dorset's urban areas as well as the national average;
  - Informing the EAFRD (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) element of Dorset's ESIF (European Structural and Investment Funds) Growth Programme;
  - Championing Dorset's LEADER programmes;
  - Supporting the Dorset LEP to fully engage with its rural stakeholders;
  - 'Rural-proofing' all Dorset LEP policies and activities; and
  - Represent Dorset LEP at Defra round tables and other related meetings.
- 4.2 All business of the Dorset REG will be conducted in accordance with the Nolan Principles of Public Life (see Appendix 1).

## 5. Board membership

- 5.1 Membership of the group can together fairly speak for the rural economies, communities and interests of the county – taking into account the economic and social and environmental impact of proposed policies and actions. As such it requires balance and breadth.
- 5.2 The Dorset REG will formally consist of up to 16 members; [including 1 representative of Dorset LEP, 7 organisations representing rural businesses, 1 representing LEADER (or subsequent funding body), 1 representing education and training, 4 representing local authorities (to be reviewed upon completion of unitarisation), 1 representing town and parish councils, 1 representing the Dorset Local Nature Partnership.

- 5.3 Dorset REG members serve in a personal capacity (with the exception of local authority members) and will act in the interests of the Dorset REG.
- 5.4 The role of business sector members is to represent the views and interest of private and community/voluntary sector businesses, with reference to particular sectors, business size and geographic area, whilst always ensuring that decisions are taken in the best interests of Dorset's business community as a whole.
- 5.5 The role of local authority members is to represent their constituents, whilst acting in the interests of Dorset as a whole.
- 5.6 The process for selecting representatives shall be determined by a clear and transparent recruitment process, including how representatives from particular groups are chosen.
- 5.7 The terms of office for Group members will stand as follows:

Member category	Term of office	Replacement if vacancy arises
Dorset LEP	As per DLEP ToR	As per DLEP ToR
Business	2 years	Open recruitment process
Representative Body	To be reviewed annually	To be decided by relevant body
Education and Training	To be reviewed annually	To be decided by the Group
Public Sector	Ongoing	To be decided by the relevant local authority
Town and Parish Councils	To be reviewed annually	To be decide by DAPTC
LEADER	To be reviewed annually	To be decided between SDLAG and NDLAG.
Dorset LNP	To be reviewed annually	To be decided by DLNP

- 5.8 The Dorset REG may co-opt up to two additional people to serve as members, if there is a clear requirement for additional expertise and experience for the successful delivery of the Group's responsibilities. Co-opted members may only serve a maximum of two years and will have voting rights.
- 5.9 Further attendees will be invited to Dorset REG meetings at the Chair's discretion for support and additional expertise, but will not have voting rights. This will include at all meetings a member of the LEP officer team.

## **6. Chair**

- 6.1 The chair shall be the nominated rural representative by the Dorset LEP Board, as per its Terms of Reference. A Vice-Chair will be elected from the total membership by the Group.
- 6.2 Duties of the Chair will include:
- Leading the smooth and effective operation of the Group;
  - To ensure the Secretariat is operating effectively and within its mandate, that budgets are appropriately applied and that proper policies and processes are in place and observed;
  - To ensure timely advice and reporting to the Dorset LEP Board relating to the work of the Dorset REG.
  - To ensure effective liaison with all constituents of the Dorset LEP and government, and to undertake activity as required according to the Dorset Rural Enterprise Priorities Paper or emerging strategies and needs.

## **7. Representation and attendance**

- 7.1 Dorset REG members (or approved deputies) are expected to attend not less than 50% of meetings over a twelve month period. If this attendance rate is not achieved by any member, the Group is entitled to review their membership and ask for an explanation before taking further action. A 75% majority is required to rescind the membership of any individual or organisation. Membership and attendance will be reviewed annually, in June or meeting nearest this time thereafter.

## **8. Decisions**

- 8.1 The Group shall operate on the basis of consensus and will operate as a body to support and enhance the rural interests of the county.
- 8.2 In the event that a consensus cannot be achieved on a matter requiring decision, that decision shall be taken by vote where the meeting is quorate (at least 8 voting members) and carried if it is supported by over 50% of those present, except in the following circumstances:
- Removal of a member, which will require 75% of all members present to agree;
  - Amending the membership of the Group, which will require approval of 75% of all members present; and
  - Amendments to terms of reference or change in the strategic direction and priorities of the Group, which will require the approval of 75% of all members present.
- 8.3 In the event of a tied decision, the Chair of the meeting will cast the deciding vote.
- 8.4 In the event that a decision is required outside of a scheduled meeting, the Chair may decide to hold an Extraordinary Meeting. For Extraordinary Meetings, the provisions of as outlined in 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 shall apply.
- 8.5 The Chair may alternatively decide to seek agreement to a proposal via Electronic Procedure. In such cases, the Secretariat shall write to each Group member requesting agreement to a specified course of action. Group members shall be given no fewer than five working days to respond to the Secretariat.
- 8.6 For a decision to be taken by Electronic Procedure, the number of members participating must be as required for a quorate meeting. Over 50% of members responding to the request must indicate agreement to the proposal.

8.7 All decisions made by Electronic Procedure shall be ratified at the next scheduled meeting.

## **9. Meetings and papers**

9.1 Group meetings shall be held on a quarterly basis with a minimum of three meetings per annum. Group meetings will be called relating to need, although the minimum notice required for a meeting is two weeks, to ensure that all members are afforded the opportunity to attend (or nominate a deputy where applicable).

9.2 The agenda and papers for meetings shall be approved by the Chair and issued at least 5 working days in advance of the meeting by the Secretariat.

1.1 Meeting minutes shall be approved in draft form by the Chair and disseminated to members no later than ten working days following the meeting. Minutes shall remain in draft until approval by the Group at the next meeting.

1.2 Minutes shall be made publicly available via the Dorset LEP website, except for minutes which are not suitable for release into the public domain, for example due to them containing personal information about individuals or commercially sensitive data. Any minutes which are not released into the public domain will be stored confidentially by the Secretariat.

## **10. Conflicts of interest**

10.1 The Group shall ensure that all conflicts of interest are fully disclosed.

10.2 The Secretariat shall maintain a Register of Members' Interests. This shall include all company directorships, trusteeships, elected offices, remunerated posts and other relevant interests. The Register of Members' Interests shall be made available to any interested party at any time. Members shall supply information to the Secretariat for inclusion in the register, or a nil return, on joining the Group, in response to any request for an update and on becoming aware of any new interest. The Secretariat will circulate a request for information about interests annually.

10.3 Should a member's interests change, s/he shall inform the Secretariat at the earliest opportunity.

10.4 Should an issue be discussed by the Group which presents a conflict of interest to a member, the member shall declare the conflict of interest, regardless of whether s/he has previously declared the interest in the Register of Members' Interests. Such declarations shall be minuted.

10.5 Members shall not vote or participate in discussions on any issues on which they have registered an interest.

## **11. Reporting to the Dorset LEP Board**

11.1 The Group shall be fully accountable to the Dorset LEP Board and shall have Dorset LEP board member representation.

11.2 The Group will provide a regular report to the Dorset LEP Board, as agreed with the Dorset LEP Board.

11.3 The Group will provide timely advice to the Dorset LEP Board, bringing to its attention matters of importance or responding to its requests.

11.4 All papers to be considered by the Dorset LEP Board must be provided at least 7 days in advance of the Dorset LEP Board meeting.

## **12. Press and Media**

- 12.1 Group members are not permitted to discuss the Dorset REG's affairs with the press or media without prior approval from the Chair.
- 12.2 In the event that members are approached by the press or media for comment on any matters relating to the Dorset REG, the matter must be referred immediately to the Chair.

## **13. Review of this Document**

- 13.1 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually.
- 13.2 The Group may amend these terms of reference at any time, according to the procedure outlined in paragraph 8.2.

### **Appendix 1 Nolan Principles of Public Life**

#### **1. Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

#### **2. Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

#### **3. Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

#### **4. Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

#### **5. Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

#### **6. Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

#### **7. Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.